

SOFTWARE

PREVIEW

Invu Ergo



If you're bored of Google's endless lists of search results, Ergo might be for you. It presents search results in a new way: instead of forcing you to scroll through lists, Ergo can show your search results as a spider diagram, with topics that match your search. Clicking on a topic opens the results, which appear as thumbnails of the webpages on a carousel similar to Apple's cover flow. Click on a result to open it in your browser, or annotate one and send it to a colleague or friend. It's an interesting approach to searching for information.

You can download the release candidate from www.yourergo.com. We'll review Ergo in greater detail when the final version is released.

Jim Martin

Deputy Editor



jim@computershopper.co.uk

CYBERLINK MediaShow 4

★★★★

£28 inc VAT

From www.cyberlink.com

If you have a large collection of digital photos and videos, you may find it hard to keep them organised and to find what you want. CyberLink's MediaShow 4 aims to make your life easier by providing a single interface for viewing and editing photos and videos.

Once the initial indexing is done, the main interface appears. On the left is a list of folders containing your photos, organised according to the year they were taken. If you've taken the time to tag your photos, you can search by these, too.

Resizable thumbnails appear in the middle of the screen, and you can drag them into the Tray on the right to add to an album, view in a slideshow or include on a DVD. Buttons along the top enable you to rotate images, batch edit them and mark favourites.

The Create menu has options for making a screensaver of your photos, creating a video slideshow, burning images to a DVD or printing them locally. The Order Prints button didn't work in our test version. The Share menu lets you email images (which the software resizes automatically) or upload them to Flickr.

Editing is non-destructive, so it doesn't affect the original photos on



▲ Adding effects to your photos is easy and, as it's non-destructive, it won't affect the original

your hard disk. It's simple to crop, remove red eye and add effects such as soft focus or colour tints. As well as the usual motion and fade effects in slideshows, there's a stylish Cell option that shows several images at once and can synchronise with background music.

The interface works in a similar way with video, but adds options to fix lighting, background noise and shaky camerawork, and trim clips. You can then upload your video directly to YouTube.

We like MediaShow 4's ease of use, but it's practically identical to Google's free Picasa 2 (see page 60). MediaShow's only real advantage is the ability to edit and upload videos, but this is just as easy with other free tools such as Roxio Buzz. If it weren't for these free alternatives, MediaShow 4 would be relatively good value.

Jim Martin

SUMMARY

- ✓ Fast 3D interface
- ✓ Simple video editing
- ✗ Free alternatives are as good

MEDIA MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE
Requires Windows XP/Vista, 1GB RAM, 20GB hard disk space, 64MB graphics card
DETAILS www.cyberlink.com

AVANQUEST Perfect Image 11 Backup & Protect

★★★★★

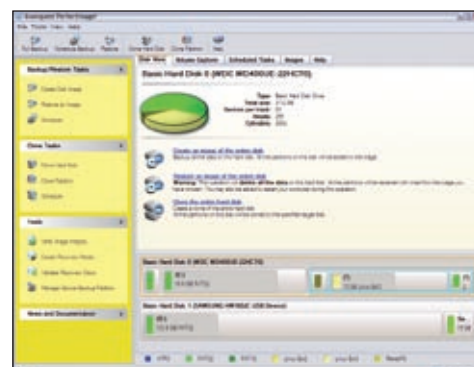
£40 inc VAT

From www.avanquest.com/uk

Perfect Image 11 Backup and Protect is a suite of tools for managing and backing up your data and disks. It comprises three distinct applications: Perfect Image 11, AutoSave 2.0 and Disk Copy and Clean.

Immediately after installation, AutoSave 2.0 asks which files you would like to protect and quietly goes about the task of keeping an eye on them. It logs changes to your working files as they are made and periodically backs them up, saving multiple versions. You can save backups to either an external hard disk, another partition on your main hard disk or to DVDs or CDs using a spanning mode that enables you to save large backups across several discs. You can view and retrieve files from these backups through a basic, efficient interface.

Disk Copy and Clean comes on a bootable CD and allows you to migrate data from one disk to another. This can be useful if you want to upgrade to a larger, faster hard disk while retaining your existing system and partition configuration. The software can expand partitions to fill the new disk, whether they use Windows or Linux file systems, and can wipe the old disk clean. These tools are available only when



▲ Perfect Image gives you a great overview of your hard disks and access to all the tools available

undertaking a disk migration however; there is no software for day-to-day partition management.

The Perfect Image application itself uses a stripped down version of the Paragon Hard Disk Manager engine. Through the same familiar interface you can view your disks and partitions and browse your file system, disk images and backups. You can clone disks and partitions, create backup images and recovery disks, and even create and manage a backup partition, all using exactly the same wizards used in Hard Disk Manager.

Although it's relatively expensive at £40, Perfect Image 11 Backup and Protect arguably provides a more useful suite of tools for the average home user than Hard Disk Manager, with AutoSave providing a particularly hassle-free method of data backup.

David McKinnon

SUMMARY

- ✓ Reliable data backup
- ✓ Useful backup and copy tools
- ✗ Reasonably expensive

SYSTEM MANAGEMENT UTILITY
Requires Windows 98/98 SE/Me/2000/XP/Server 2003/Vista/XP 64-bit/Server 2003 64-bit/Vista 64-bit, 64MB RAM, 10MB disk space, internet connection.
DETAILS www.avanquest.com/uk

COREL CorelDraw Graphics Suite X4

★★★★

£317 inc VAT

From www.misco.co.uk

CorelDraw Graphics Suite holds a unique position in the market. The main application, CorelDraw, is a professional-level vector editor and the only serious rival to Adobe Illustrator. Illustrator is widely recognised as the industry standard, but it's not cheap at around £450. Not only is CorelDraw Graphics Suite less expensive, it also comes with Photo-Paint X4, an image editor to rival Photoshop. However, home users may only need the cut-price Photoshop Elements or Xara Xtreme, a capable vector-graphics application that costs just £45. So with a price that places it out on a limb between the home and professional markets, CorelDraw's has its work cut out to attract either group of users.

There's plenty to please professionals, though. Barcode generation is built in, and with pre-press checks, CMYK support, colour separations and PDF and PostScript export, it's more than up to the demands of preparing graphics for professional production. Unlike Illustrator, CorelDraw supports multiple-page documents, making it a

viable option for DTP. Handling of layers across multiple pages has improved; the Object Manager's Master Page contains guides and objects common to all pages, while other elements on layers are grouped by page number. The new Table Tool will be welcome for both DTP and graphic design tasks, as it can merge and split cells, as well as manipulate rows and columns. Cells can contain text, fills or graphics, but we couldn't find an easy way to import Excel data.

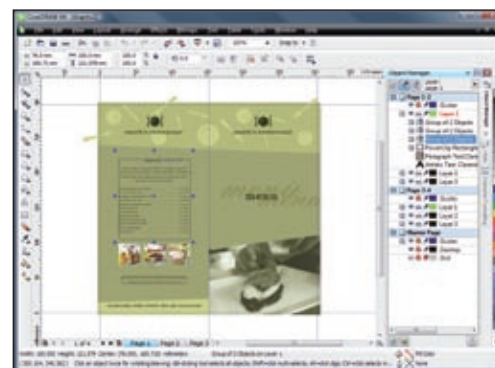
CorelDraw's excellent text handling is valuable to all kinds of users. The new live text preview speeds up text formatting by showing changes as you scroll down lists of fonts rather than having to select each in turn. Another new feature cross-references unknown fonts, say from a scanned image, against an online database to find an exact or near match.

Photo-Paint X4's new features include an improved Tone Curve filter, non-destructive effects that behave like Photoshop's Adjustment Layers, plus a tool for straightening images. However,

SUMMARY

- ✓ Full of sophisticated features
- ✗ Interface is a little clunky
- ✗ Overkill for home users

GRAPHICS SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista (32- or 64-bit), 512MB RAM, 430MB disk space (4.3GB for full installation)
PRODUCT CODE CDGSX4IEPC
DETAILS www.corel.co.uk



▲ CorelDraw's new templates provide a useful starting point for a range of projects

while it's not short of features, Photo-Paint is far behind Photoshop for ease and speed of use, and lacks equivalents for some of Photoshop's best features, such as the Liquify tool. It now supports Photoshop CS3 and camera RAW files, but we found opening some files problematic.

Ultimately, it's not just CorelDraw's smaller professional user base that makes Illustrator and Photoshop more tempting for businesses. It's also a relative lack of polish. Despite a redesigned interface, CorelDraw Graphics Suite felt as if it required a bit of a prod before we could get what we wanted from it. We also experienced a few errors and crashes. Photoshop and Illustrator, while just as complex and as time-consuming to learn, are more intuitive and reliable. For home and occasional business use, CorelDraw and Photo-Paint are uninviting compared with Xara Xtreme and Photoshop Elements.

Ben Pitt

Also consider...

OPENOFFICE OpenOffice.org 2.1

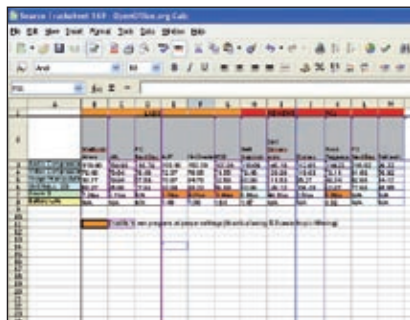
★★★★★

Free

From www.openoffice.orgCOMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

OpenOffice is a completely free office suite, and it's brilliant. It might feel a little old-fashioned next to Microsoft Office's flashy features, but it has a number of excellent applications including a word processor, spreadsheet, database and presentation program. It's an essential piece of software for any PC owner.

OFFICE SUITE Requires Windows 98 or later, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 800MB disk space
DETAILS www.openoffice.org
FULL REVIEW Sep 2007



ADOBE Creative Suite 3 Design Premium

★★★★★

£1,620 inc VAT

From www.dabs.comCOMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

Adobe's Creative Suite has quickly become the best bundle of creative software around. With its new Design Premium edition, it's got even better. The bundle includes InDesign, Photoshop Extended, Illustrator, Acrobat Professional, Flash Pro and Dreamweaver – everything you need, whether you're creating work for print or the web.

CREATIVE SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP SP2/Vista, 512MB RAM PRODUCT CODE 29500009
DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk FULL REVIEW Aug 2007



GETDATA Recover My Files

★★★★★

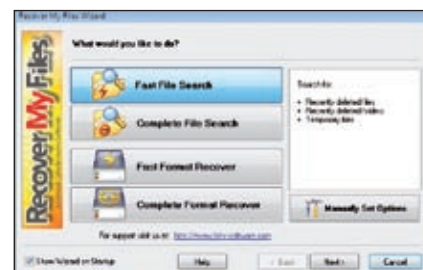
£33 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.ukCOMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

Recover My Files is an invaluable program for anyone who has accidentally deleted files or folders. The program can even recover all the files from a fully formatted hard disk, or other media such as a USB flash drive, optical discs, tapes or memory cards.

It supports over 200 file types, including JPG, MP3, DOC, ZIP and MPG, plus obscure types such as saved games and internet favourites. Just make sure you have enough spare capacity on a second disk for the recovered files.

RECOVERY SOFTWARE Requires Windows 95 or later, 128MB RAM DETAILS www.getdata.com
FULL REVIEW May 2008



MACRIUM Reflect 4.2

★★★★★

£20 inc VAT

From www.macrium.com

Backup novices should look away now – the little-known Macrium Reflect is not aimed at you. Unlike the feature-packed backup applications from Acronis and Norton, Reflect started as a humble shareware program.

It certainly retains signs of its roots: it's not the easiest software to use and has nothing like the wealth of features of Acronis True Image 11. Reflect lacks extras such as file shredding or drive cleansing tools (which delete all the data on a hard disk permanently) and the interface could hardly be called polished – it's essentially just a glorified Explorer window.

Macrium's strength is its flexibility. It has oodles of it, as long as you know what you're doing, because it uses VBScript. When you create a backup task, it's saved as an XML file; you can right-click on this and choose to generate a VBScript file. A raft of VBScript text is then generated, to which you can add any instructions you like.

Reflect lets you tick boxes to add instructions such as logging, auto-shutdown on completion, email integration and even a script to bypass Windows Vista's irritating User Account Control pop-up warnings. The complete backup task can then be

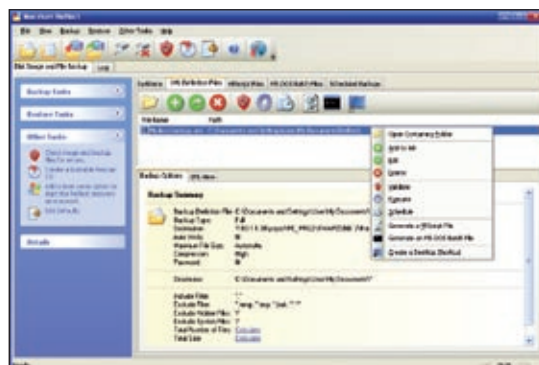
turned into a batch file or a desktop short cut so you can simply run it whenever necessary.

It's good to see that Macrium has included a full scheduling utility, which you can set to run daily, weekly or monthly, at a precise time or when you log in or out of Windows. Basic backups work in a similar way to every other backup program; there's a choice of full, differential and incremental backups. You can back up entire partitions and hard disks or choose individual files and folders. Usefully, you can also exclude or include specific file types to save time.

Backups can be compressed, too. Macrium claims to use the fastest available methods for this, and our test backups were certainly quick during this part of the process. You can add a password and choose between 128, 192 or 256-bit AES encryption – but bear in mind that the latter requires a whopping

32-character password.

When restoring a backup, one click mounts the entire file structure into a standard Explorer window. Currently, you need to have Reflect installed, but Macrium plans to release a Windows plug-in later in the



▲ Once you've created your backup set, Macrium allows you to tweak it using VBScript

year to allow browsing without the software. When you're done, just choose Detach and the backup window disappears from Explorer.

Most backup utilities now come with boot options, and Macrium is no different. You can create a CD, DVD or ISO image, but Reflect can also set your PC to boot into Windows PE (pre-installation environment) for Vista users, or the uglier BartPE for XP users; there's even a Linux-based environment for the ultimate in simplicity. Each lets you perform basic restoration tasks without booting into Windows, which can be a life-saver if your operating system is corrupt.

Touches like this emphasize Macrium Reflect 4.2's strength: it may not be as pretty as the big boys of the backup business, but it lets you get your hands dirty, giving you all the power you need to do things your own way. We can't recommend it for those new to backup, but experienced users should give it a try.

David Bayon

SUMMARY

- ✓ Extremely flexible
- ✓ Less bloated than some tools
- ✗ Can be daunting to use

REQUIREMENTS Windows Server 2003/XP/Vista
DETAILS www.macrium.com

Also consider...

ROXIO Easy Media Creator Suite 10

★★★★★

£40 inc VAT

From www.kimatek.com

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

This suite comes with almost all the media-editing tools you'll ever need. Its greatest strengths are its tight integration between all the modules and its friendly, task-oriented interface. With the recent drop in price, it's now even better value and it's the best media suite you can buy.

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP or Vista, 500MHz processor, 128MB RAM (1.6GHz, 512MB for Vista), 3.2GB disk space PRODUCT CODE 048068411 DETAILS www.roxio.co.uk FULL REVIEW Jan 2008



KASPERSKY Internet Security 7.0

★★★★★

£36 inc VAT

From www.kaspersky.co.uk

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

With a clear interface and superb anti-virus protection, the latest version of Kaspersky's Internet Security is great value. It deflected every web exploit we threw at it, and its firewall is so discreet we had to double-check it was running. There's excellent spam filtering, instant messaging integration and various tools for cleaning up after an infection. Watch for special deals on Kaspersky's website if you don't want to spend this much.

INTERNET SECURITY SUITE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, 800MHz processor, 512MB RAM, 50MB disk space DETAILS www.kaspersky.com FULL REVIEW Mar 2008



NAMO WebEditor 2006

★★★★★

£68 inc VAT

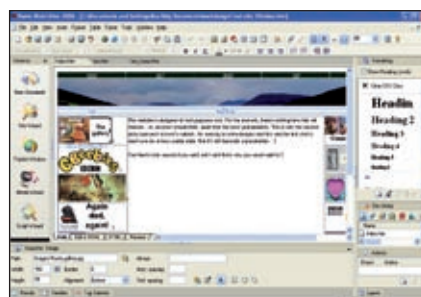
From www.namo.com

COMPUTER
SHOPPER
BEST BUY

Laid out like Adobe's Dreamweaver, Nammo WebEditor is easy to work with and lets you get a lot done by flicking between the different workspaces. You can work with the code, in WYSIWYG or in a split screen that shows both.

There's help for novices, such as a wizard for embedding music and video files, or adding elements such as expanding menus. Its combination of simplicity, precision, versatility and a competitive price make it a winner.

WEB-DESIGN SOFTWARE Requires 98/Me/2000/XP/Vista, 550MHz processor, 128MB RAM, Internet Explorer 5 or later DETAILS www.namo.com FULL REVIEW June 2008



FREE SOFTWARE

GOOGLE Picasa 2.7

★★★★★

From <http://picasa.google.com>

Picasa is one of the best free photo and video management utilities around. The interface is easy to use and lets you view thumbnails as large or small as you like. There's even a built-in editor for non-destructively enhancing photos – to crop and sharpen them, for example. You can arrange photos into albums and upload them to a free Picasa Web Album, email them or send them to your Blogger site. The main limitation compared with CyberLink MediaShow 4 (see page 56) is the lack of video-editing tools.

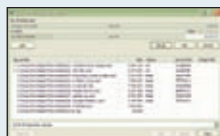


CODE SECTOR Teracopy

★★★★★

From www.teracopy.com

Teracopy's sole purpose is to copy and move files as quickly as possible, replacing the standard Windows functions. One of its tricks is to copy files asynchronously to speed up transfers between two physical hard disks. It also allows you to pause and resume transfers and skip a file if it encounters errors, rather than terminating the entire transfer. The software supports 32-bit and 64-bit versions of Windows XP and Vista. See our How to... guide on page 141 for more information and a walkthrough.

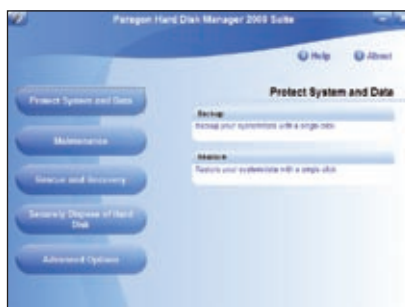


ASCIIEXPRESS WebGuide4

★★★★★

From www.asciieexpress.com

WebGuide lets you view live and recorded TV shows remotely from your Media Center PC. You can also schedule recordings, which is ideal if you're out and about and realise you've forgotten to record *The Apprentice*. The interface looks like Media Center and lets you search and manage your recorded programmes, photos, videos and music. It's even possible to access these functions on a compatible mobile phone or handheld device. For those with Vista Media Center, there's also a useful Sidebar Gadget.



▲ This suite lets you manage every aspect of your hard disks with ease

PARAGON Hard Disk Manager 2008 Suite

★★★★★

£30 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk

Hard Disk Manager 2008 provides a range of tools that let you get hands-on with your hard disk. Wizards handle general disk maintenance and copying routines and are grouped by theme. For example, the Protect System and Data option opens the backup and recovery wizards, while Maintenance provides access to the included Paragon Total Defrag 2007 disk defragmentation tool and hard disk copying tool – useful for backup and system migration.

Rescue and Recovery allows you to restore data backups, create a bootable disc and copy files from any supported file system to CD or DVD for archiving. There's also a disk wipe tool that permanently erases all or part of a disk.

The partition tools have a standalone interface similar to that of the previous version (Hard Disk Manager 8.5). The main window provides an overview of your disks and their partitions; you can delve deeper and browse individual partitions, even those not formatted in a native Microsoft format. You can even copy files from one to another, creating a useful data bridge between operating systems. Partitions are seamlessly created, modified, copied and deleted, and you can even redistribute free space between partitions.

The wizards provide everything you need for copying, backing up and restoring hard disks and partitions, and the separate partition management tool is excellent. Still, we're not sure why 2008 Suite isn't presented as a single application like its predecessor, rather than a selection of wizards plus standalone defragmentation and partition applications.

Amazon is currently offering 2008 Suite for only £15, which makes it an absolute bargain. Even at the standard price of £30, though, it's still good value.

David McKinnon

SUMMARY

- ✓ Excellent partition handling
- ✓ Multiple file system support
- ✗ Inconsistent interface

HARD DISK MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/2000/Vista, 300MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 80MB disk space. File Systems supported: FAT16, FAT32, NTFS, Linux Ext2, Linux Ext3, HPFS, other file systems sector by sector.
DETAILS www.paragon-software.com



▲ Spinning the virtual wheels of steel is great fun with this low-cost DJ software

EJAY DJ Mixstation 4

★★★★★

£30 inc VAT

From <http://uk.store.empireinteractive.com>

Whether you host polite soirées or raucous knees-ups, a well-stocked MP3 collection is much more manageable than a pile of CDs for keeping guests happy. However, there's something painfully uncool about iTunes' Party Shuffle mode. EJay's DJ Mixstation is much more appropriate. At its simplest, it can work through playlists in MP3, WMA, Ogg Vorbis and WAV (but not AAC) format, crossfading between tracks for uninterrupted music. It also includes a manual crossfader and pitch sliders for a more creative approach to mixing. There's a wide range of effects including compression – for maintaining a constant level – and a basic sampler for triggering sound effects. Its vinyl scratching simulation is dire and the ability to loop sections of a track is cumbersome, but it's fairly easy to play two tracks with their tempos in sync and crossfade between them.

A common problem with DJ software is that a mouse is a poor substitute for the tactile controls of real DJ equipment. DJ Mixstation makes up for this with extensive keyboard shortcuts. It's a pity the list is buried among the options rather than being displayed when the cursor hovers over the interface, though. One crucial feature that's missing from the onscreen buttons, but included in the keyboard controls, is a pitch nudge for correcting tracks that have drifted slightly out of time with each other. This feature uses the Page Up and Page Down keys.

Another common problem is an inability to preview a track on headphones while another track is playing. DJ Mixstation allows this if two sound cards are installed, although it can't use front and rear outputs of a surround-capable sound card. This makes using a laptop, which will have only one sound card, difficult.

Serious DJs will find DJ Mixstation too clumsy, but if approached light-heartedly, it should provide plenty of entertainment.

Ben Pitt

SUMMARY

- ✓ A fun way to play music libraries
- ✓ Comprehensive keyboard shortcuts
- ✗ Too crude for serious use

MUSIC SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, 1GHz processor, 1GB RAM, 600MB disk space
DETAILS www.ejay.com